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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003861

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SUBJECT: IRAQI PARLIAMENTARIAN ON IRAQIYYA PARTY PROBLEMS,
WOMEN,S ISSUES

REF: BAGHDAD 3789

Classified By: Ambassador Khalilizad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In an October 13 meeting, parliamentarian and secular cross-sectarian Iraqiyya party member Maysoon Al-Damluji told the Ambassador that Hameed Mousa, acting as the head of Iraqiyya, had defied Ayad Allawi's instructions to boycott the key October 11 region formation law vote. The incident highlights Iraqiyya's disorganization and failure to capitalize on opportunities to gain political concessions. She expressed concern that constitutional review would roll back women's rights and human rights in the process. She expected the personal status law to be approved, and pledged to continue building coalitions to advance women's issues.
END SUMMARY.

Regions Law Vote Highlights Iraqiyya's Management Crisis

¶2. (C) Council of Representatives (COR) member and Iraqiyya party secretary Maysoon Al-Damluji told the Ambassador that Iraqiyya leadership had met on October 9 to agree on a strategy for the October 11 region formation law vote. According to Al-Damluji, they agreed to attend the voting session, and to spend the remaining time before the session lobbying other members to support their draft. However, when they learned that the Sadrists, Fadhila, Hewar and Tawafaq would boycott the vote, they knew that their version of the law would not pass. Al-Damluji said that she discussed the situation in a phone call with Ayad Allawi (who is still in London receiving medical treatment), and that Allawi instructed the party to boycott the session as well.

¶3. (C) Al-Damluji said that Communist Party leader Hameed Majeed Mousa was acting as the Iraqiyya leader in the absence of Ayad Allawi and Adnan Pachachi. However, between Iraqiyya's strategy session and the vote, he was unreachable. On the day of the region formation law vote, he and six other Iraqiyya members defied Allawi's instructions (NOTE: There were more than seven Iraqiyya members present in the session room during the vote. END NOTE), and provided the necessary quorum for the vote to proceed. Al-Damluji speculated that the Communist Party's historic ties to Kurdistan may have played a role in his decision and lamented that they could have gotten many more concessions from SCIRI if the party had just acted cohesively.

¶4. (C) According to Al-Damluji, both Allawi and Pachachi are very upset about the issue, and that some Iraqiyya members now refuse to work with Mousa. The Ambassador agreed that Iraqiyya had great leverage in the beginning of federalism negotiations, noting that SCIRI was desperate then. He was surprised that the party had not come together to capitalize on the opportunity, noting that Allawi's absence and his

inability to manage the party from abroad had weakened Iraqiyya.

Constitutional Review Concerns

¶ 15. (C) Al-Damluji worried that passage of the region formation law would diminish the desire to move forward with constitutional review, a priority for both her party and for secular women. The Ambassador stressed the importance of Iraqiyya presenting a united front on the issue. He noted that while they could not press the Kurds on the federalism issue, they were natural allies on women's issues. The Ambassador urged Iraqiyya to work with the Kurds during the review process to strengthen constitutional guarantees of women's rights.

¶ 16. (C) While she agreed that the Kurds were more progressive on women's rights, Al-Damluji was concerned that they may trade support of women's issues for concessions on Kirkuk. She noted that women in Kurdistan had sufficient protections in the draft KRG constitution, so these issues would have less significance for the Kurds in the national constitution. The Ambassador assured Al-Damluji that the U.S. would not support such a scenario.

Coalition Building and the Personal Status Law

¶ 17. (C) On the topic of women's issues, the Ambassador asked Al-Damluji whether parliamentary women had made progress on forming issue-based coalitions. She explained that although

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the UN had tried to establish these types of alliances, the differences between the parties had been too great to bridge the gap. She said that they were now trying to organize caucuses in the party blocs. If successful, they would become the basis for a women's caucus in parliament. However, Al-Damluji noted that at present, allegiance to party platforms is stronger than allegiance to common issues.

¶ 18. (C) Al-Damluji called the COR Committee on Women, Children and Families a "disaster" and confided that she is thinking of resigning. She said that extremists dominate the committee and that she feels that she would get better results lobbying from the outside rather than having to support committee decisions with which she did not agree. Al-Damluji cited the issue of the personal status law, noting that committee chairwoman Sameera Al-Mousawi (Shia Independent) had told her that "Sistani does not allow the personal status law." Al-Damluji warned that leaving the issue as it is in the constitution will take power away from the judges and give it to the clerics and that eventually "religion will take over."

¶ 19. (C) Al-Damluji expects support from the Kurds and Tawafaq on the personal status law, and is optimistic about its passage. She is less confident about efforts to insert a clause recognizing Iraq's obligations to respect and implement international human rights treaties and agreements to which it is a signatory. The Ambassador urged Al-Damluji to continue to build relationships, especially with moderate Islamists. He said that women's issues are not high priorities on many of the party leaders' agendas, but noted that this could work in her favor, since they are not yet committed to positions on these issues. When the Ambassador asked how he could support efforts on women's issues, Al-Damluji said "we expect support from you; we do not expect you to do our work for us." She said that she would continue to reach out to a broad range of women.

KHALILZAD